This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Digitized by Google

Reg 3295
C Hildreth

MEMOIR

OF

HENRY ORIN HILDRETH.

BY

ERASTUS WORTHINGTON.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

EDW^{D} R. ANDREWS, PHOTO. 1898. HELIOTYPE PRINTING CO

Henry O. Hildreth.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MEMOIR

OF

HENRY ORIN HILDRETH.

BY

ERASTUS WORTHINGTON.

PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF THE DEDHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

DEDHAM, MASS.
1893.

Digitized by Google

Rev. B. H. Blodgett
(1869)

[Reprinted from the DEDHAM HISTORICAL REGISTER
for October, 1893.]

Digitized by Google

HENRY ORIN HILDRETH.

THE memory of a man, who, in a spirit of self-forgetfulness and with such a singleness of purpose as to exclude any idea of personal advantage to himself, for thirty-five years and more, has devoted a large fraction of his time to promote the best social interests of the community in which he lived, and to advance the personal interests of others, deserves to be perpetuated by more than a simple recital of the official positions which he held and the dates of his birth and death. All this may be truly said of the late Henry Orin Hildreth; and it gives the writer a peculiar satisfaction to have the opportunity offered him to pay a tribute due to the memory of an old friend and associate, whose modesty was so retiring and whose life so unobtrusive, that the world could not know his true worth.

Mr. Hildreth was born in Neponset Village, Dorchester, March 22, 1826. He was descended from Richard Hildreth the emigrant settler, and was the son of Orin Hildreth, a merchant of Boston. His school years were spent in the Hampton Academy, Hampton, N. H., and in the Chauncy Hall School, Boston, where he was a medal scholar. His condition of health obliged him to forego a cherished plan of entering college and he began a life of business in the office of the Northern Railroad Company in Boston. In Dorchester he early formed many agreeable associations with leading men, which he always recalled with satisfaction in after life. He was an anti-slavery man from the start, and in 1848 was an active and ardent Free-Soiler.

Digitized by Google

His removal to Dedham came about by his purchase in October, 1852, of the Dedham Gazette, which at that time was the leading newspaper of Norfolk County. Under the proprietorship and editorial charge of Edward L. Keyes, a prominent leader in the Free-Soil Party, and also a graceful orator and vigorous writer, the Dedham Gazette was widely read for the pungency of its editorial columns throughout eastern Massachusetts. But the health of Mr. Keyes was broken, and he was obliged to relinquish the ownership and charge of his paper. With the political views of the Gazette, Mr. Hildreth most cordially sympathized, and in his hands it maintained its former political position. It was printed in the rooms lately occupied by the Fisher Ames Club, on the corner of Court and Norfolk Streets. The Gazette had a large share of the legal advertising of the County and a good subscription list. Mr. Hildreth was by no means so aggressive a political writer as his predecessor, and his inside columns were devoted to matters of interest to people of the Town and County, as well as to politics, and they were free from offensive personalities. He had a refined taste, and took special care in the selection of poetry, stories and miscellaneous matter for the outside columns. In October, 1854, Mr. Hildreth purchased the Norfolk Democrat, after the death of its editor, Elbridge G. Robinson, and the property and subscription list of that newspaper were then merged in those of the Dedham Gazette, and but one newspaper was published in Dedham afterwards. Mr. Hildreth was a Republican when the party was first organized under that name in 1855, and he continued to be a Republican until his death. In 1870 the Dedham Gazette was removed to Hyde Park, where it has since been published under the name of the Norfolk County Gazette. Mr. Hildreth continued to be its editor until 1874, when his connection with the paper ceased.

In 1857 Mr. Hildreth succeeded Mr. Keyes as Secretary of the Norfolk Agricultural Society. This society, under its able President, Marshall P. Wilder, since 1850 had attained a high degree of prosperity. Its annual fairs were red-letter days in

Digitized by Google

the Dedham calendar. The show of fruits and live stock equalled those of any society in the Commonwealth, while the after dinner speeches and the grand ball in the evening, gave *eclat* to the exhibition days. The office of secretary was not remunerative, nor was it a sinecure, since it required a personal visitation of all the towns of the County in order to arrange for the exhibitions, and the preparation of the annual reports of the society involved much labor. Mr. Hildreth was admirably fitted for this position, and its duties were agreeable to him, since he was brought into pleasant relations with many excellent people of the County, and so gained an extensive acquaintance, which was to him better than a pecuniary compensation. During a considerable portion of the summer months he rode through the County to make necessary arrangements for the exhibitions, and while no doubt these circuits withdrew his attention from his newspaper they served to increase his subscription list. He continued to hold his office so long as the Society existed.

Mr. Hildreth, from the beginning of his residence in Dedham, took a deep interest in its local affairs, and was active in projecting and promoting many good enterprises for its social improvement. Among these were two social clubs, quite informal in their organization and limited in the number of members, but which must be pleasantly remembered by all now living who belonged to them. Mr. Hildreth had been a member of a successful Conversation Club in Dorchester, composed of gentlemen who met at the houses of the members weekly for the discussion of questions of public and local interest. At his suggestion a similar club was formed in Dedham, Dec. 24, 1855. It met weekly, with few intermissions, during the winter months until April 21, 1871, after which it was not called together. The maximum number of its members at any one time was twelve, and it had no officer but a secretary, which office was held by Mr. Hildreth during the whole period of its existence. Among the members not now living, were Thomas L. Wakefield, Dr. Ebenezer G. Burgess, George Coolidge, John C. Shorey, Frank H. Shorey and John H. B. Thayer. Of those living but who have

Digitized by Google

removed from Dedham, were Prof. John D. Runkle, John Lathrop—, now Judge of the Supreme Judicial Court—, Rev. Benjamin H. Bailey, Dr. Joseph P. Paine, Oliver F. Bryant, Josephus G. Taft and Munroe Chickering. "The Club," for such was its name, did not act as a body, but through the individual efforts of its members, its power and influence was manifest. During sixteen years it maintained a continuous life, and its discussions had a wide range of subjects. But in local and town affairs it accomplished many good results. It inaugurated a series of lectures and concerts in the winter of 1858-9. On May 1, 1858, under its auspices, a large number of elm trees were planted on the Great Common, around Agricultural Hall and on High Street. After the planting, a collation was served in Agricultural Hall, at which Edmund Quincy presided, and the Rev. Dr. Lamson and Josiah Quincy, Jr., made speeches. In 1858 its members proposed, and by their efforts carried through the vote of the School District to erect the Ames School-house, and in 1859, with their co-operation, one hundred elms and maples were planted in the streets and on the school-house grounds. In April, 1859, the members caused the defeat of an article in the town warrant which proposed the sale and removal of the Old Powder House, by a counter proposition to put it in repair, which was carried out at the expense of the members. In the Club and in these special matters, Mr. Hildreth acted as a leader, and it was really his ideas and efficient work that made the undertakings successful.

In 1857 Mr. Hildreth was actively instrumental in forming a Shakespeare Club of ladies and gentlemen, which met each fortnight until 1860 to read Shakespeare's plays, with occasional selections from other poets.

In February, 1859, Mr. Hildreth took an active and leading part in organizing the Dedham Historical Society. He had been connected with the Dorchester Antiquarian Society, and for a considerable time he had sought to interest gentlemen in Dedham to form a similar society. He was the secretary of its first meeting, and chairman of a committee to form its constitution. From its beginning until 1888, when he removed to Cam-

Digitized by Google

bridge, Mr. Hildreth was steadfastly devoted to the interests of this Society. He was indefatigable in his efforts to add to its collection, and all through the "days of small things" in the history of the Society, his interest never flagged. He suggested many lines of research at the meetings, and was unsparing of his own time, money or personal effort. This was well illustrated when the new society building was ready to be furnished in 1887. Mr. Hildreth had been interested in the very timely and generous gift of the Avery Oak by the late Joseph W. Clark to the Historical Society in 1886. He had personally attended to the pruning of the tree, and with great pains had preserved some of the limbs, from which, under his own supervision and at his own expense, he caused to be made the fine President's chair after the model of the John Eliot chair, and the desk from the oak timbers of the Avery House, which he preserved when it was torn down. Mr. Hildreth was the Corresponding Secretary of the Society from 1859 to 1875, and its President from 1875 to 1888.

In 1876 Mr. Hildreth prepared and published the Norfolk County Manual. This was a statistical and historical volume suggested by a resolution of Congress recommending the preparation of county histories in our national centennial year. It involved a good deal of research into original sources of information, as no book of a similar kind had ever been published. It contains much valuable material, and is a reliable reference book for the history of Norfolk County, with biographies of many of its prominent men. It was purely a patriotic work for which Mr. Hildreth could never have received any adequate reimbursement, even of the cost of publication.

Mr. Hildreth was a member of the "Committee on Historic Tablets and Monuments" at the celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the Incorporation of Dedham, and he contributed to the report of that committee published in the Proceedings, a full history of the Powder House, and sketches of the Dowse House and of the Haven House. He rendered also an important and

Digitized by Google

valuable service, for which he was specially fitted, in carefully editing the Proceedings when they were being printed.

Mr. Hildreth had been engaged for some years upon a genealogy of the descendants of Richard Hildreth, and his last work was done in arranging for a 250th anniversary celebration of the coming of his emigrant ancestor.

Mr. Hildreth never was elected to any political office. He was a Director of the Dorchester Mutual Fire Insurance Company for thirty-nine years, and a Trustee of the Dedham Public Library from 1871 until the transfer of the library to the town in 1889. He was the Postmaster of Dedham from 1878 to 1886. He was for twenty years Chairman of the Republican County Committee, when that committee printed and distributed the ballots in the towns at each annual election. At one period he was actively interested in politics, but he abhorred the indirect methods of politicians. In giving his influence to advance the political fortunes of others he was discriminate, and while he did not exert himself to promote any man to office whom he considered to be unfit or unworthy, when his judgment approved he spared no effort which could honorably be made; and first and last, there were not a few men, who in political ethics, would be deemed his debtors.

In private life he was sincere, loyal to his friends, sensitive in matters of principle and without reproach. He died at his home in Cambridge of pneumonia, March 12, 1893. He married Cornelia, the daughter of John and Cornelia (Guild) Shorey, Sept. 8, 1859, who survives him. His son, Henry Theodore Hildreth (H. C. 1885), during the past year has been Assistant Professor of the Greek language and literature in Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island; and a younger son, Edward Francis, died in infancy.

ERASTUS WORTHINGTON.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

3 2044 029 895 182

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google